

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

In light of the tragic events at the Tree of Life Synagogue last Saturday, October 27, 2018 in which 11 people lost their lives and six others were gravely wounded, I am writing this letter urging swift action by the Senate to provide appropriate resources to synagogues and other nonprofits across our country that are vulnerable to acts of terrorism.

The DHS Authorization Act, which was reported out of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, included two important amendments that I co-authored with Senator Peters to do just that. Our first amendment would help protect Jewish Communities and other nonprofit institutions around the country by granting them to access important FEMA funding that is currently only available to certain metropolitan areas. Specifically, it would require 30 percent of the funding of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program be distributed to nonprofits outside of the Urban Area Security Initiative metropolitan areas. While I am encouraged that the Appropriations Committee has included \$60 million for the Non Profit Security Grant Program in the DHS appropriations bill, only \$10 million of that funding is allocated to communities that do not qualify for UASI funding. While it is a good start, it is not sufficient. Currently no cities in my home state of Ohio would qualify for UASI funding. I am therefore urging the Senate to pass full funding for the NSGP and making certain that nonprofits in states like Ohio get their fair share by ensuring that 30 percent of the funding goes to non-UASI cities. As seen from the scope of threats to non-profits in recent years, the threat extends well-beyond our largest urban areas.

Our second amendment included in the DHS Authorization Act ensures nonprofits have a seat at the table of the Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshops. These are important forums for all regional stakeholders that provide important information as they assess any threats to their community.

Thank you for your consideration of these common sense policies to help protect the security of synagogues and other nonprofit entities around our nation. I urge the full Senate to act this year to provide the authorities and funding to better protect synagogues and other nonprofits across the country.

Sincerely,



Rob Portman